

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An inflatable airbag module for protecting a vehicle occupant comprising:

an airbag module cover including a substrate surface that lacks a tear seam, an instrument panel adapter, and an airbag housing interlock, the airbag module cover being adapted to be integrated with an instrument panel substrate to provide a surface suitable for receiving a decorative overlay, the overlay being a skin-and-foam overlay;

an airbag module housing having an airbag case portion and an airbag module cover interlock portion, the module housing being adapted to be coupled to the airbag module cover; and

an airbag cushion configured to deploy from the airbag module housing, wherein there is no opening visible seam between the substrate surface and the instrument panel when the airbag module is installed onto an interior of the vehicle, wherein the substrate surface is configured to receive a the skin-and-foam overlay to provide a surface suitable for use in the interior of the vehicle, wherein the substrate includes an orifice positioned below the decorative overlay.

Claim 2 (cancelled)

Claim 3 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 1, wherein the instrument panel adapter comprises a radial flange extending from the substrate surface of the airbag module cover.

Claim 4 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 1, wherein the instrument panel adapter comprises a face of the module cover configured to be attached to an instrument panel.

Claim 5 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 1, wherein the airbag housing interlock comprises a plurality of locking fingers projecting from the module cover that are configured to extend into the airbag module cover interlock of the airbag module housing to join the module cover and the module housing.

Claim 6 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 5, wherein the module cover interlock of the airbag module housing is configured to receive the locking fingers of the module cover in a locking fashion.

Claim 7 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 1, wherein the airbag module cover further includes a tear seam.

Claim 8 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 7, wherein the tear seam is molded, stamped, or punched into the airbag module cover.

Claim 9 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 7, wherein the tear seam is laser-scored into the airbag module cover.

Claim 10 (original): The inflatable airbag module of claim 1, wherein the airbag cushion is a passenger-side airbag cushion.

Claim 11 (currently amended): An airbag module cover for enclosing a passenger airbag module, the airbag module cover having a substrate surface configured to receive a decorative overlay, wherein the substrate surface does not include a tear seam, an instrument panel adapter, and a plurality of locking fingers extending from the cover in a direction substantially opposite the substrate surface, wherein there is no opening visible seam between the substrate surface and the instrument panel when the airbag module is installed onto an interior of the vehicle, wherein the substrate surface is configured to receive a skin-and-foam overlay to provide a surface

suitable for use in the interior of the vehicle, wherein the substrate includes an orifice positioned below the decorative overlay.

Claim 12 (cancelled)

Claim 13 (original): The airbag module cover of claim 12, wherein the airbag module cover further includes a tear seam.

Claim 14 (original): The airbag module cover of claim 13, wherein the tear seam is molded, stamped, or punched into the airbag module cover.

Claim 15 (original): The airbag module cover of claim 13, wherein the tear seam is laser scored into the airbag module cover.

Claim 16 (currently amended): A vehicular instrument panel having an integral airbag module cover comprising:

a primary dashboard panel having a substrate surface configured to receive a decorative overlay and an airbag module cover adapter, wherein the substrate surface does not include a tear seam; and

an airbag module cover having a substrate surface configured to receive a decorative overlay, the overlay being a skin-and-foam overlay, an instrument panel adapter, and an airbag housing interlock; wherein the airbag module cover may be integrated with the primary dashboard panel and wherein the substrate surfaces of the resulting assembly may be coated with a decorative overlay, wherein there is no visible seam opening between the substrate surface and the primary dashboard panel when the airbag module is installed onto a vehicle, wherein the substrate surface is configured to receive a skin-and-foam overlay to provide a surface suitable for use in an interior of the vehicle, wherein the substrate includes an orifice positioned below the decorative overlay.

Claim 17 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 16, wherein the airbag module cover adapter of the primary dashboard panel comprises an orifice sized to receive the airbag module cover.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 17, wherein the orifice of the airbag module cover adapter of the primary dashboard panel further comprises an adapter channel having a depth sufficient to allow the airbag module cover to nest into the substrate surface of the primary dashboard panel without protruding through the panel.

Claim 19 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 17, wherein integration of the primary dashboard panel and the airbag module cover provides a combination substrate surface that is sufficiently even that the application of a decorative overlay results in a substantially even surface with no obvious seams.

Claim 20 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 18, wherein the instrument panel adapter of the airbag module cover comprises a radial flange extending from the substrate surface of the airbag module cover.

Claim 21 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 18, wherein the instrument panel adapter of the airbag module cover comprises a face of the module cover configured to be attached to an instrument panel.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 16, wherein the substrate surfaces of the primary dashboard panel is configured to receive a skin-and-foam overlay.

Claim 23 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 16, wherein the airbag housing interlock comprises a plurality of locking fingers projecting from the airbag module cover that are configured to join the airbag module cover with an airbag module.

Claim 24 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 16, wherein the airbag module cover further includes a tear seam.

Claim 25 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 24, wherein the tear seam is molded, stamped, or punched into the airbag module cover.

Claim 26 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 24, wherein the tear seam is laser scored into the airbag module cover.

Claim 27 (currently amended): A vehicular instrument panel having an integral airbag module cover comprising:

a primary dashboard panel having a substrate surface and an airbag module cover adapter, the primary dashboard panel being integrally formed with an airbag module cover having a substrate surface, an instrument panel adapter, and an airbag housing interlock; wherein the substrate surfaces of the primary dashboard panel and airbag module cover may be coated with a decorative overlay, the overlay being a skin-and-foam overlay, wherein there is no visible seam opening between the substrate surface and the primary dashboard panel, wherein the substrate surface is configured to receive a skin-and-foam overlay to provide a surface suitable for use in an interior of a vehicle, wherein the substrate surface does not include a tear seam, wherein the substrate includes an orifice positioned below the decorative overlay.

Claim 28 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 27, the primary dashboard panel and the airbag module cover provide a combination substrate surface that is sufficiently even to receive a decorative overlay with a substantially even surface with no obvious seams.

Claim 29 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 27, wherein the instrument panel adapter of the airbag module cover comprises a radial flange extending from the substrate surface of the airbag module cover.

Claim 30 (canceled)

Claim 31 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 27, wherein the airbag housing interlock comprises a plurality of locking fingers projecting from the airbag module cover that are configured to join the airbag module cover with an airbag module.

Claim 32 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 27, wherein the airbag module cover further includes a tear seam.

Claim 33 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 32, wherein the tear seam is molded, stamped, or punched into the airbag module cover.

Claim 34 (original): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 32, wherein the tear seam is laser scored into the airbag module cover.

Claim 35 (withdrawn): A vehicular instrument panel having an integral airbag module cover comprising:

a primary dashboard panel having a substrate surface configured to receive a decorative overlay and an airbag module cover portion having an airbag housing interlock; wherein the primary dashboard panel may be connected directly to an airbag module housing, and wherein a portion of the primary dashboard panel covers a portion of the airbag module housing.

Claim 36 (withdrawn): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 35, wherein the airbag housing interlock of the airbag module cover portion comprises at least one locking finger projecting from the airbag module cover to join the airbag module cover with an airbag module housing.

Claim 37 (withdrawn): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 35, wherein the airbag module cover further includes a tear seam.

Claim 38 (withdrawn): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 37, wherein the tear seam is molded, stamped, or punched into the airbag module cover.

Claim 39 (withdrawn): The vehicular instrument panel of claim 37, wherein the tear seam is laser scored into the airbag module cover.

Claim 40 (currently amended): A method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel comprising the steps of:

providing an instrument panel substrate having a substrate surface adapted to receive a decorative overlay and an airbag module cover adapter for receiving an airbag module cover;

providing an airbag module cover having a substrate surface adapted to receive a decorative overlay, and an airbag housing interlock;

placing the airbag module cover into the instrument panel substrate;

applying a decorative overlay to the instrument panel substrate and the airbag module cover; and

attaching an airbag module to the airbag module cover, wherein there is no opening visible seam between the substrate surface and the instrument panel when the airbag module is installed onto the vehicle, wherein the substrate surface is configured to receive a decorative skin-and-foam overlay to provide a surface suitable for use in the interior of the vehicle, wherein the substrate surface does not include a tear seam, wherein the substrate includes an orifice positioned below the decorative overlay.

Claim 41 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 40, wherein the airbag module cover adapter comprises an area of the instrument panel substrate recessed to accommodate the airbag module cover.

Claim 42 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 40, wherein the airbag module cover further includes an instrument panel adapter.

Claim 43 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 42, wherein the instrument panel adapter comprises a radial flange extending from the substrate surface of the airbag module cover.

Claim 44 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 42, wherein the instrument panel adapter comprises a face of the module cover configured to be attached to an instrument panel.

Claim 45 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 40, wherein the airbag housing interlock comprises a plurality of locking fingers projecting from the module cover that are configured to extend into the airbag module cover interlock of the airbag module housing to join the module cover and the module housing.

Claim 46 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 45, wherein the module cover interlock of the airbag module housing is configured to receive the locking fingers of the module cover in a locking fashion.

Claim 47 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 40, wherein the airbag module cover further includes a tear seam.

Claim 48 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 47, wherein the tear seam is molded, stamped, or punched into the airbag module cover.

Claim 49 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 47, wherein the tear seam is laser-scored into the airbag module cover.

Claim 50 (original): The method of assembling an inflatable airbag module and a vehicular instrument panel of claim 40, wherein the airbag cushion is a passenger-side airbag cushion.